[31st January 1931

Fisheries

Pearl fishing off the coast of Tuticorin.

* 362 Q.—Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar: Will the hon. the Minister for Education and Excise be pleased to state—

(a) what action has been taken in solving the question of the erratic appearance of the pearl oyster in the pearl fishing grounds off Tuticorin; and

(b) whether the latest appliances and apparatus for examining the sea bottom at great depths are being used for solving the problem referred to?

A.—(a) The mysterious appearance of the spat in phenomenal abundance in 1922 when the pearl banks in Ceylon and India were practically barren combined with the equally strange fact that from 1922—1928 when several banks in Ceylon and India contained breeding adult oysters there was practically no spat fall noticeable on the Indian banks led to a search for mother beds of oysters which very probably lie beyond the 11 fathom line, up to which alone the local naked diver is able to fish. The trawler was deputed for this work and did some survey beyond the 11 fathom line of Tuticorin and Manapad as well as to the south-west of Travancore and Cape Comorin for about six weeks in 1928 and a small patch of young oysters was met with in the latter locality in depths of 18 fathoms. Meanwhile the Fisheries Committee pointed out that the most important work of the trawler is the survey of the deep sea fisheries and that she should be engaged in this work primarily till the whole extent of the Coast has been surveyed and mapped. Thereupon the whole question of the policy and programme of work for the trawler was discussed and it has been decided to continue her work up to 1932 exclusively on deep sea research in order that Government may decide whether the survey should be continued or not. Further work on pearl banks has therefore been stopped for the present.

Experimental work on pearl oysters was started at Krusadai Island in 1928 but the oysters secured and kept under observation were lost in a storm and have not yet been replaced owing to the absence of live oysters on the banks so far inspected and also the suspension of the dredging operations by the trawler in search of mother beds of oysters in deeper waters.

(b) The usual types of oyster dredgers as well as some specially designed for the purpose have been tried and resulted in the discovery of the patches of young oysters in 18 fathoms mentioned above. But the bottom is rocky in most places and several dredgers have been lost. For rocky ground some type of grab will have to be tried when the research is started again.

Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar:—"May I call the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that last October a large number of cases treated with special apparatus proved successful?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur S. Kumaraswami Reddiyar:—"Notice, Sir."